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English

Attitudes in Sweden towards four Different Varieties of the English Language: a Quantitative Study

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes of Swedish people towards the following varieties of English: *Indian English* (IndE), *American English* (AmE), *Nigerian English* (NigE) and *British English* (BrE). The study was conducted via a written questionnaire which was answered by a total of 157 participants. The majority of the participants displayed a positive attitude towards British English and American English, while many did not think much of Indian English and Nigerian English, or were not familiar with them. The data was also analyzed through the perspective of the participants' gender, age and educational level. Although there were some differences, the results indicated that there were not many particular features represented by these different social factors. Overall, the results give a picture of BrE and AmE as the most known, used and acceptable Englishes to the participants in this study. The data mainly show that AmE is most preferred amongst the younger participants, while BrE is mostly preferred by the older participants. This study also discusses and highlights the importance of exposure to the concept of World- or Global Englishes in a post-colonial and globalized era. The attitudes revealed in this study show that these topics are still necessary to discuss.

Keywords: English, Sweden, Attitudes, Linguistic Attitudes, World Englishes, IndE, AmE, NigE, BrE, Written Questionnaire

List of Abbreviations

ENL - English as a Native Language

ESL - English as a Second Language

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

NS - Native Speaker

NNS - Non-native Speaker

WQ – Written Questionnaire

IndE – Indian English

AmE – American English

NigE – Nigerian English

BrE – British English

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1. Introduction

Due to factors such as colonialism and globalization, English has become a globally spread language throughout history. Historical events, such as the British conquest of America, the colonization of the Caribbean islands, India, multiple countries on the continent of Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia and so on, contributed to the worldwide expansion of the English language (Melchers & Shaw 2011: 6-8). Another aspect of the spread of English is the events that carried out globalization and its effects, a few of those being colonizing events as mentioned above, economic trades, slavery, transportations, industries, technology, and so on. Through events such as these the English language was spread around the globe. English was used in settings where one or several indigenous languages already existed. This led to mixing English with the native languages, thus English became characterized by the setting and its inhabitants. As time passed, new Englishes started to develop (Crystal 2003: 39-41).

English is, as Melchers and Shaw (2011: 10) put it, “a language which has grown up and left home and now seems to be a resource worldwide”. This description seems to be accurate since English is an official or half official language in more than 70 countries worldwide, and in over 20 other countries where it is not official, it still has a significant status amongst the inhabitants (Svartvik, 1999: 4). Many linguists, including Crystal (2003: 2-3), highlight the fact that English is more than a native language to some – it has gained such international importance that nobody can claim ownership of it. Even though linguists struggle to break these barriers, there are still attitudes that need to be changed, and information about the global aspect of English that needs to be spread. Similarly, Gramley mentions that

English is no longer restricted to a community of (native) speakers who are in face-to-face contact with other (native) speaker. Global travel and technology have changed the traditional picture of the language

(Gramley: 2012: 351)

Gramley proposes that the English language should be viewed differently and not only defined by the native users, but rather by all of its users, regardless of their origin. This perspective invites us to understand English through a world perspective, rather than a solely European perspective. This way of thinking immediately includes all users of the language.

The concept of *World- or Global Englishes* has become a central term in the debate of the English language. It refers to different varieties of English, used in various sociolinguistic

settings and functions as a political acknowledgement mainly toward the Englishes which often tend to be marginalized by the outdated abstractions of native speaker-superiority. *World Englishes* presumes that all varieties of English have locally distinctive modes of expression influencing the language, and still are seen as equal to each other (Crystal: 2003: 3-10). This presupposes that the plurality of Englishes represented through Canadian English, South African English, Philippine English, Kenyan English and so on, are all equal in terms of linguistic value and authenticity. As Jenkins (2015: 26-27) mentions, even though non-native varieties of English, such as Standard Indian English or Standard Singapore English, have gone through processes of standardization, been codified in grammar books and dictionaries, they still tend to be seen as non-standard varieties. As a variety develops its own language norms in terms of e.g. phonology, grammar, lexicon, and dialect, which often reflects on the autochthonous language(s), the variety starts a process towards standardization. Standardization suggests that deviations should not be considered as errors, but rather as a development of the independence of the specific variety. Other aspects such as literature are developing factors for the individualization of the variety, as well as identity markers for the users of the specific variety. These are steps that even the native varieties have gone through.

Previous attitudinal studies about different varieties of English, made in various countries worldwide, indicate that not all varieties are seen as equal. Some participants claim that the level of “correctness” varies, depending on the variety, in terms of e.g. grammar, dialect and lexicon (e.g. Labov 1972, Salakhyan 2015). However, this abstraction of “correctness” in language is unsustainable, since the users of the language constantly develop and change the language according to their setting (Crystal: 2003: 7). The key point is that in order to have a “right” language, there need to be a “wrong” language. The distinction between right or wrong in this case is simply an abstraction built of power structures constructed throughout history. Even new forms of the language developing in the UK, such as *Multicultural London English* (MLE) are being criticized as sloppy, incorrect and reactionary innovations (Clayton 2012). In other studies (e.g. Jenkins 2011), there is a general pattern in how people reflect on English, and it seems as British English and American English tend to be seen as the source of ‘correct’ English. Therefore, when people use this idea as basis for their reflection, the remaining Englishes tend to be excluded in the discussion of authenticity and status, as they are seen as varieties of British English or American English, rather than distinct varieties.

However, not much research has been done on which variety of English is most preferred amongst Swedish people. English is a big and yet growing language in Sweden, to

the extent that various linguists are concerned about the position of Swedish in relation to English (e.g. Mannberg 1986; Teleman 1992). Therefore, the aim of this essay is to collect and explore the attitudes of Swedish people towards four different varieties of English. The varieties that will be used for this essay will be *Indian English* (IndE), *American English* (AmE), *Nigerian English* (NigE) and *British English* (BrE). The reasoning behind the choice of these particular varieties was firstly to choose two native varieties and two non-native varieties, to see whether they are evaluated the same or not. Secondly, AmE and BrE were chosen since they tend to be seen as the source of “correct” English. They are also the two varieties of English that most Swedes might be expected to be familiar with. IndE and NigE were chosen based on their geographical diversities, yet similar categorization from Kachru’s work (1985).

Therefore, this essay aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the attitudes in Sweden towards the four chosen varieties of English?
- Do factors such as gender, age or educational level affect or generate different attitudes?

The essay will begin with providing background information about the topic by discussing previous research within the field and introducing the term *World Englishes* (section 2). Then, the method which was used to conduct the study will be explained and discussed (section 3). The essay will continue by showing the results of the data, and the data will be analyzed from a gender perspective, an age perspective and from the participants’ educational level, in order to see if the social factors mentioned generated different result (section 4), before offering the conclusions (section 5).

2. Literature Review

This section will provide information about the sociolinguistics of the English language, and the way in which people are connected to it (section 2.1). English will also be discussed in a Swedish context (section 2.2) and its function in the Swedish school system (section 2.3).

2.1. English in a Global Context

According to Crystal (2003: 59), British colonialism set the foundation for the global spread of the English language during the 19th century, and US economy kept it alive during the 20th century. Therefore, today, English is globally an important language to many speakers who may use *English as a Native Language* (ENL), *English as a Second Language* (ESL), or *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) in their daily lives. ENL, as defined by Jenkins, is “the language of those born and raised in one of the countries where English is historically the first language to be spoken”, such as the UK, the USA, and Australia. ESL then, refers to the language used in countries which were colonized by the British, such as India, Singapore, and Nigeria, to mention a few. Finally, Jenkins mentions that the English used in countries which have not been colonized by the British, is called EFL (2015: 10-12).

Various linguists, such as Crystal (2003: 60-61), Dollinger (2015: 143) and Jenkins (2011: 10, 2015: 14-15), present Kachru’s “circle model” of English (Kachru, 1985), to explain the different ways in which people can be linguistically connected to English. In the model, Kachru uses three concentric circles to demonstrate the global spread of English. *The Inner Circle* includes traditional bases such as the UK, the USA and Australia, where English is the primary language. *The Outer Circle* refers to countries that have had colonial ties to England. These are countries such as India, Nigeria and over fifty other territories, in which English has become institutionalized. Finally, *The Expanding Circle* represents the rest of the world, such as Sweden, China and Russia, which recognizes importance in learning the language, but has not given it any official status. Crystal (2009: 69), estimates that *The Inner Circle* has 320-380 million speakers, *The Outer Circle* around 300-500 million speakers, and *The Expanding Circle* around 500-1000 million speakers.

Considering that the number of *native speakers* (NS) of English is significantly less than the number of *non-native speakers* (NNS), it is problematic to think that the English language belongs to those in *The Inner Circle*. A NS of English refers to someone who grew up using English as their home language in a native setting such as the UK, while a NNS of English is someone who learned English later in life in a non-native setting such as China. It seems as the sociolinguistic reality of English has been disregarded, and one might notice that long-accustomed mindsets and attitudes have put a veil between our perception of reality, and what the English language has really become. This mindset also seems to imply that speakers should strive to learn the English of the natives, which on the one hand reproduces the idea of linguistic superiority, and on the other hand contributes to linguistic inequality. This is

problematic in the sense that it creates opposition between two binary values, the standard versus the non-standard, where the standard is exclusively seen as superior and original, and the non-standard is seen as an attempt to mimic the standard. Jenkins (2015: 26) highlights that hierarchies even exist internally within the same circles, as e.g. in *The Inner Circle*, where *Australian English* (AusE) was excluded from it up until the 1970's.

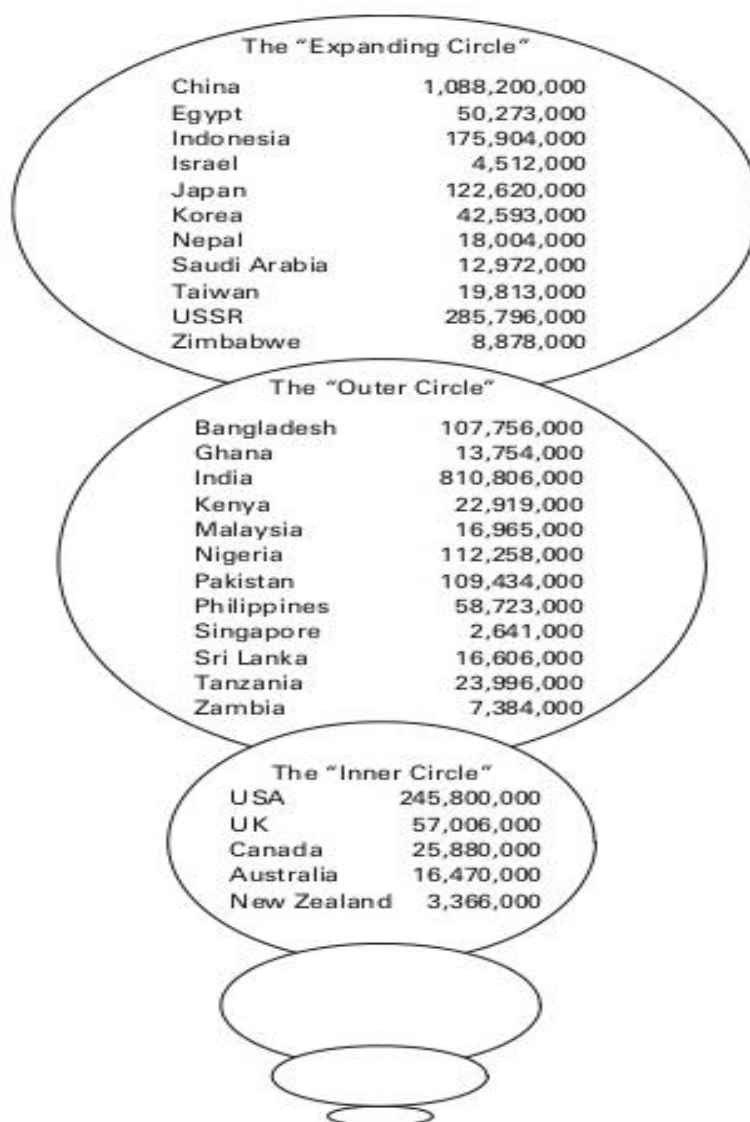


Figure 1. Kachru's Concentric Three Circle Model (Kachru 1990: 4)

There are different points of views expressed by how English is used and dealt with, one by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, as follows:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost.
Chinua Achebe (1964: 62)

What Achebe suggests in this statement is simply that the different World Englishes should strive to individualize the language so it may fulfill its purpose as an identity marker, without making it incomprehensible to users of other varieties of English.

Similarly, Rao (1967) writes about how the Indian people cannot express themselves fully when using English regarding things considering Indian culture, one example being storytelling. The emotional meaning gets lost in translation and the construction of the English language does not keep up with the “Indian tempo”. Rao (1967:vii) mentions that English is the language of the “intellectual make-up” of the Indians, but not that of the “emotional make-up”. The power of language restrains the Indians from expressing themselves in some contexts where English is used. The Indians must be able to adapt the language, without it losing value.

From these statements we can understand that post-colonial nations in *The Outer Circle* have had English integrated into their communities for generations, and it does not necessarily mean that they want to exclude English from their identity, now that it has become a part of it. It is rather the lack of acknowledgement and authenticity from others, towards their language, that is problematic and marginalizing. The idea of a “standard” is ambiguous, depending on who is asked. Therefore, the idea of ‘owning’ a language is not sustainable, especially in the context of a global language like English. As Lundahl (2009: 78) mentions, the use of English as a world language implies that the native speaker-norm is gradually being pushed aside.

Therefore, this study sees importance in exploring whether the Swedish people evaluate the four chosen varieties of English the same or not. Since English is such a given topic in Sweden, this study sees great importance in eliciting the attitudes regarding different Englishes and explaining the concept of World Englishes rather than one (or few) “correct” Englishes and the other Englishes being varieties of the “correct” ones, as seen in e.g. Jenkin’s study (2011).

2.2. English in a Swedish Context

As we change perspectives and look at English in a Swedish context, the discussion of the power of language continues. “Swedish”, as Hult (2004: 183) points out, “seems to be caught between a rock and a hard place”. What is meant is that in relation to English, Swedish needs a stronger position. Meanwhile, in relation to the minority languages of the nation: Meänkieli (Tornedalian Finnish), Sami, Romani Chib, Finnish and Jiddisch (Hult, 2004), Swedish needs to leave space for them to grow bigger. This presupposes that English has an overall strong position in Sweden, which makes it of great importance that the Swedish people understand English not only through a European perspective, but rather from a global perspective.

Various linguists, including Telemann (1992) and Hyltenstam (1999), have found that English is often used within certain domains such as university, research, banking and engineering. Hyltenstam (1999) suggests that the power of English in certain domains might develop a gap in the Swedish society, where English is used for interaction within high status domains and Swedish will be used for common interactions within the everyday life. On the one hand Westman (1996) expresses that the position of Swedish will be weakened if English continues to force it out of certain domains. On the other hand Boyd (1999) highlights the positive aspect of English by calling it a tool for ‘transatlantic’ as well as global communication. This study therefore asks the Swedish people about their educational level, to see if any indications of the above mentioned concern is seen in any pattern or not.

As we understand that linguists have mixed opinions about the position of English in Sweden, another aim of this essay is to explore what people in Sweden think about the English language as a tool for success. Therefore, the Swedish people will be asked about whether they believe that English is a necessity in order to be successful.

2.3. English Teaching in a Swedish Context

In Sweden, English studies start in the early stages of compulsory school. Normally the children are in first, second or third grade (Skolverket 2011, online). In 1996, as Lundahl (2009: 73) points out, there were clear directives in the Swedish syllabus that English should be taught with refined British English or American English as a main goal for good

pronunciation. In the present time though, the syllabus has changed perspective, as it now says that

ett centralt syfte med undervisningen i engelska är [sic] eleverna ska få kunskaper om och förståelse för olika livsvillkor samt sociala och kulturella företeelser i områden och i sammanhang där engelska används.

(Skolverket 2011, online)

‘a central aim of the teaching of English is that students will acquire knowledge and understanding of the different living conditions and social and cultural phenomena in the fields and in the context in which English is used’.

(Skolverket 2011, online, own translation)

Although this in itself is a big achievement for the equality of World Englishes, the Swedish syllabus does not direct teachers to enlighten the students about World English varieties. Even though the guidelines in the syllabus do no longer direct teachers towards using British English or American English in teaching, it does not encourage them to introduce any other specific varieties. Therefore, the teachers might simply continue teaching as they did before the change, and there is a risk that the changes in the syllable is disregarded. Furthermore, the native speaker-ideal is still represented in most of the teaching material. The schoolbooks, for example, often use native speakers in audio-dialogues, and the dictionaries as well as the grammar books often reflect the prescriptive rules of British English or American English, rather than the descriptive reality of World Englishes. The native speaker-ideal is also represented in the cultural content of the courses, and therefore the traditional routines of teaching British English or American English tend to stay after all (Lundahl, 2009: 73-74). Lundahl (2009: 75) underlines that the way one chooses to pronounce a language is intimately connected to one’s cultural identity. Considering the fact that Sweden is a multicultural and multilingual country, it is of great importance that different Englishes and their cultures are represented in educational environments, so that students can gain knowledge about them and prevent any prejudices based on stigmatized representations of them and glorifying representations of native speaker varieties such as BrE or AmE.

As discussed in this section, the English language has a complex situation in the world, and many linguists strive to increase awareness amongst people of English being a world language. The syllabus in the Swedish school system has been changed, thus British English and American English are no longer concrete goals to strive towards in English

teaching. Although this per se is a big step towards the equality of World Englishes, the syllabus does not actively mention other Englishes, or even the plurality of Englishes, thus there is a risk that there will not be a difference in the practical teaching. Therefore, in order to examine the knowledge of and attitudes of Swedish people towards World Englishes, the participants will make different choices to show how they think about the chosen varieties.

3. Method

The goal of this section is to explain how this study was conducted (section 3.1.), which tools were necessary (sections 3.2. and 3.3.), and finally, finding the participants which provided the data (3.4.).

3.1. Choosing the Method

Since the aim of this study is to collect data in order get an idea of the general attitudes of the participants towards the chosen varieties of English, a quantitative method has been chosen. A quantitative approach seemed most appropriate, since there were only a few questions, but these needed to be answered by many participants (Dollinger 2015: 173). This study collected its empirical data by using a *written questionnaire* (WQ). To be able to collect the right amount of data, as well as the right kind of data, the WQ was a suitable tool. The positive aspect of this quantitative research method is that it generates straightforward answers of participants representative of one society. Since some of the questions in the WQ might be sensitive or too revealing for some, this method also functioned as a veil between the individual and the writer, thus more honest answers were likely to be given. The negative aspect of the WQ method might be that the participants cannot fully express themselves. In an attempt to get around this issue, it was decided to add an open field on most questions. The access link for the written questionnaire was available online for a total of 12 days, this was necessary in order to collect enough data.

3.2. Constructing the Written Questionnaire

According to Schleef (2013), the questionnaire should have an introductory part that covers seven basic, but essential parts, including:

1. The title of the questionnaire;
2. Brief explanation of its purpose;
3. A request of fully honest answers;
4. Information about the different elements of the questionnaire, including a time estimate;
5. The promise of anonymity;
6. The researcher's name, institution and contact details;
7. An expression of thanks.

These parts were all included in the introduction, except for the mention of the researcher's name and institution. The participants were given the contact information of the researcher and an offer to receive the outcome of the study, i.e. this essay, by e-mail.

Another concern that was kept in mind while designing the questionnaire was its length. As Dollinger (2015: 231) puts it, the length of the questionnaire is "one of the most crucial categories when designing a survey". The questionnaire should not be too long as it could result in the participants not answering all of the questions, or not starting to answer the questions at all (Dollinger, 2015:231). Dollinger (2015: 233) also points out that the participants might expect that the number of linguistic questions should not be less than the number of background questions, and that the researcher should meet these expectations. Therefore, the questionnaire consists of ten background questions and twelve linguistic questions.

In order to create an online questionnaire, it was crucial to find a website that could offer the right service. The first website that was taken into consideration had a limit of 10 questions before it required a fee to continue making of the questionnaire (Survey Monkey, 2016, online). Since the questionnaire could not be complete by reducing half of the questions, another website became that of choice (Survey Planet, 2016, online). Survey Planet (2016, online) is a survey site which offers a non-limited questionnaire service, which was appropriate for this study. This website also offers tools to design surveys, spread it online,

reviewing the result and exporting them into Excel, Word or PDF. For this survey, the output was exported into the spreadsheet program Excel.

3.3. Constructing the Questions

While constructing the questions, two factors were considered. Since the aim was to elicit as honest answers as possible, it was necessary not to propose questions that directly addressed the issue at stake, the questions should not be too direct since the participants might find them uncomfortable to answer or in some cases manipulated to answer in one way or another. On the other hand, it was crucial not to confuse the participants by circling too much around the topic. The balance between these two extremes is crucial while constructing the questions (Dollinger, 2015: 234).

The decision of making most of the questions open (open-response item), that is, as defined by Dollinger (2015: 236), questions which “invite answers with an open text field that the respondents are asked to fill in”, came naturally. The remaining questions, which were most likely to generate answers such as yes/no, female/male etc., were constructed as closed questions (closed-response items), which is defined as questions which “offer a limited set of answer categories” (Dollinger, 2015: 236). For the closed questions an open field, labelled “other”, was added to not limit any of the participants in their answers.

As mentioned in section 3.2., the questionnaire consists of ten background questions (Q1-Q10), followed by twelve linguistic questions (Q11-Q22). The first three linguistic questions ask each participant where and how they have learned English, how they come in contact with English, and whether one needs to learn English in order to become successful (Q11-Q13). These questions were asked mainly to get an idea of how integrated English is in the life of each participant, and their general opinion of English as a tool for success. The remaining nine questions (Q14-Q22), asked if the four chosen varieties are known to each participant. They were also asked to rank the four varieties based on criteria such as pleasantness, understandability, appropriateness for public speakers, and also in which order they would recommend the varieties to someone who is interested in learning English. Finally, the participants were asked to answer whether each variety is a dialect or a distinct language. There was also room for other suggestions in an open field labelled “other”.

Furthermore, Gass & Mackey (2011: 3) underline the importance of pilot-testing the

questionnaire, to make sure it will fulfill its purpose. Therefore, two volunteers for the pilot study were asked based on their different educational levels and belonging to different age groups, to answer the questionnaire and report thoughts, reactions, questions, and so on. After the pilot-testing, the pilots commented on two questions that seemed lacking in fairness, as they were asked to rank the varieties according to which was the most “correct”, and the other asked which variety implies a higher level of education. The first question was remade simply by changing “correct” to “pleasant” and “understandable”, the second question was removed completely, as it became clear that there was no particular motive behind it, thus it became clear that it was unnecessary to keep it.

3.4. Population Sampling

The data collecting was made through the social media channels, Facebook and Instagram. These particular channels were chosen based on their popularity in Sweden. In fact, 70% of internet users in Sweden use Facebook, and 40% use Instagram (Findahl & Davidsson 2015: 40-48). Although users between 16-25 years old are the most frequent amongst users, users in older age groups are active on Facebook and Instagram as well. In fact, 50% of those between 66-75 years are Facebook users, and 40% of those between 36-45 years are Instagram users (Findahl & Davidsson 2015: 41-42). Thus, these channels were considered appropriate for this study, in order to find a mixed crowd of participants.

Our choice for using social media channels has also other empirical reasons. Dollinger (2015: 270) underlines the importance that “every member of a population must have the same chance to be selected in the sample”, and Creswell (2014: 247) defines *random sampling* as a procedure which ensures that “each individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population”. Various researchers, including Andersson & Benthin (2010) and Nyström (2015), have used social media as a tool for sharing written questionnaires in order to reach out to all kinds of people. Ho (2014) explains that “the contemporary technological platform and tools for conducting online survey via social network sites, such as Facebook are more user-friendly, more widely available and more powerful than ten years ago”. As an extra advantage, the questionnaire could also be shared by others than the researcher, e.g. those who participated and their friends. In that way the questionnaire could also reach out to social groups that would be difficult for the researcher to connect with and

the sampling would have more of a random nature. Since the questionnaire for this study was welcoming to such a wide range of people, the issue of the “wrong” social group being reached was of little concern.

This section has discussed the thoughts behind the written questionnaire, the process of creating it, and finally spreading it to the participants. Almost naturally, the way to spread it became through the social networking sites Facebook and Instagram. During a total of twelve days, 157 participants participated by filling out the questionnaire online.

4. Results

This section will cover a general overview of the results (section 4.1), a gender specific analysis of the results (section 4.2), an age specific analysis (section 4.3), and an analysis based on the participants’ educational level (section 4.4). Finally, there will be a discussion of the results (section 4.5).

4.1. An Overview of the Results

157 participants answered the questionnaire; most of them are between 16 and 30 years old, and hold a university diploma. The majority of the participants identified themselves as female. “Other” was chosen as gender by only one of the participants, between 16 and 30 years old, and holds a high school diploma (Appendix 1, Tables 1-3). Considering that only one participant chose the alternative gender, the results had to direct focus on the results of female and male, in the question of gender.

Regarding the first research question (“what are the general attitudes in Sweden towards the four chosen varieties of English?”), the general pattern is that most participants believe that English is a necessity for people who want to become successful (Appendix 1, Table 4). Furthermore, the data shows that most participants are very much familiar with AmE and BrE, but not as much with IndE or NigE (Appendix 1, Figure 1). Despite the fact that most participants have never used or heard someone else use NigE (52.23%, Q15), there were only some that choose to refrain from ranking NigE in Q16 (23.57%), Q17 (23.57%) and Q18 (25.48%). Even fewer participants choose not to answer Q21 (3.82%). NigE was ranked the lowest in all categories after AmE, BrE and IndE. This could be because the

participants which were not connected to NigE in any way, ranked what was unknown to them the lowest.

Most participants ranked AmE as the most understandable and pleasant of Englishes, the most appropriate for public speakers, and the English they would recommend in first hand to someone who would like to learn the language (Appendix 1, Tables 5-7). As the data confirms, the participants categorized the four Englishes significantly differently as only a few participants believe that IndE and NigE are distinct languages, while it seems as more natural to think of AmE and BrE as distinct languages (Appendix 1, Tables 8-11)

Overall the general picture is that the majority of the participants consider English a necessity for success. Moreover, the majority is familiar with AmE and BrE and tends to display positive attitudes towards both. This is opposed to IndE and NigE, which are not as familiar to the participants, thus they think little of them or do not have an opinion at all. Furthermore, the majority prefer AmE over all four varieties. The results will be discussed further in sections 4.5.

4.2. Gender differences in the data

The second research question (“do social factors such as gender, age or educational level affect or generate different attitudes?”), was examined from a gender point of view to begin with. Except for parts of Q16, Q18, Q20 and Q21, the statistical differences between the different genders were so small that they became insignificant. The first significant difference noticed between the two genders is that women tend to say more often that they are not familiar with NigE, and therefore choose not to rank the variety (26%, men: 14.63%, Q16). The second difference between women and men is that men are more inclined to see AmE and BrE as dialects of some general standard, while women display more or less the opposite pattern. (Appendix 2, Tables 13 and 19). This might be since most men (75.8%) tend to view all varieties as dialects. From this we can draw the conclusion that the attitudes of the participants are not mainly affected by gender differences. Women and men generally display the same types of attitudes towards the four varieties of English, in this study.

4.3. Age differences in the data

The second research question was also examined from an age point of view. There were some significant findings, which will be discussed in this section. As the results show, the younger participants place less importance in knowing English for success (60%, Q13), than the older participants (86.49%). Although, it is relevant to mention that many of the young participants (18.33%), as opposed to the older (2.7%), instead answered that it depends on within which field or county one ones to become successful, or that it “depends on what success means”.

Another difference between the different age groups is that the older age group (86.49%) are more familiar with IndE than the younger age group (60%), and the younger participants (25.83%) seem to be more familiar with NigE than the older participants (5.41%, Q14). In addition, the younger participants who have used or heard someone else use NigE (54.17%), are more than the older participants (27.03%). The older participants also tend to rank IndE more frequently as number three as opposed to the younger participants (Appendix 2, Table 2). Furthermore, the younger generation tend to rank NigE as number 3 as opposed to the older generation, which instead tend to rank NigE as number four (Appendix 2, Table 2). It is also noticed that younger participants prefer AmE, and older participants prefer BrE for public speakers (Appendix 2, Table 5). Older participants rank IndE as number three more frequently than the younger participants (Appendix 2, Table 5).

From the point of view of age we therefore learn that older participants first of all seem to agree that English is an important tool for success, while the younger participants believe it depends on how success is defined or within which field one wants to succeed. Older participants are more likely to choose IndE before NigE, while the younger participants display the opposite. Furthermore, the data points out that AmE is more preferred amongst younger participants, while BrE is ranked the highest amongst the older participants. From, this, we can draw the conclusion that there were some significant differences between the different age groups regarding their opinions and knowledge, but the fact remains that AmE and BrE are ranked in the top two, while IndE and NigE stay in the bottom two.

4.4. Educational differences in the data

Finally, the second research question was analyzed from an educational point of view, where

the participants displayed some different results depending on their level of education. The first noticeable difference is that participants with a high school- or university diploma more frequently believe that English is a necessary tool if one wants to become successful (63.27%/69.77%, Q13), as opposed to participants which are currently studying at university (55.56%, Q13). Those currently in university also seem to be more familiar with IndE than the high school and university graduates (33.33%, Q14). The high school graduates stand out from the other two groups since they have not used or heard somebody else use IndE as much as the other groups (46.94%, Q15). It also seems as those currently in university have not used or heard someone else use NigE as much as the other groups (61.11%, Q15). From this, we can draw the conclusion that the main factor of differences in opinion was not mainly affected by the participants' level of education.

4.5. Discussion

As we can see from the results, there is a clear pattern in the way the majority of the participants tends to think of and evaluate the four different varieties of English used in this study. AmE and BrE are without exception always in the top two, while IndE and NigE tend to stay in the bottom two. These are not surprising data, as previous linguists (e.g. Jenkins 2011, Hundt *et al.* 2015), have already established that placing inner circle varieties above other varieties, is a very common mind set around the world, as many people are schooled to think of the Inner Circle varieties of English as the “correct” ones. Clearly, this way of thinking is outdated and the need of acknowledging as well as accepting other varieties of English is considered a matter of course by linguists. Furthermore, considering the lack of representation of World Englishes in the English teaching in Sweden, the results are not surprising. As seen in this study, many participants are not aware of the plurality of Englishes, thus they have more positive attitudes towards the varieties of English that they have been exposed to, i.e. AmE and BrE. Some participants stated that, on the one hand, they were not familiar with IndE or NigE, but on the other hand, regardless of their low knowledge about these varieties they still chose to rate them as 3's or 4's (4 being the lowest ranking position), instead of refraining from ranking them at all. In conclusion, the participants tend to display that IndE and NigE are varieties of some sort of general Standard English, which repeatedly pointed towards BrE or AmE. The data also confirms that the English of the native speakers

would almost exclusively be recommended to future learners of English, thus it highlights the fact that “the native speaker-ideal” is very much central amongst the participants.

The data did not tend to differ much based on the participants’ gender, age or education. The key point is that the varieties were ranked the same, and that generally both women and men tend to display the same attitudes. As for the matter of age, the significant differences between the two groups were only a few. The pattern shown is basically that the older participants more frequently seem to rank BrE as number 1 in most questions, while the younger participants rank AmE as number 1. In 1993, Modiano stated the following

Many students no longer harbor an appreciation for things British that many teachers cling to, nor are they as willing to pattern their linguistic behavior upon British role models [...] there is every reason to assume that students will become more interested in “sounding” American”

(Modiano, M. 1993: 39)

In a way, the following statement predicted the direction of the English language in Sweden well, as the results confirm that BrE tend to be preferred by the older participants and the younger participants prefer AmE. Although this is a tendency shown in the data, there is not a crystal clear pattern, as many of the younger participants also preferred BrE and some of the older participants preferred AmE.

Another age-related phenomena emerging through the data is that older participants tend to be more familiar with IndE, while younger participants tend to be more familiar with NigE. One might speculate that the reason for this might be that immigration to Sweden from Asia started from the beginning of the 1970’s, while the immigration to Sweden from Africa started from the end of the 1980’s (SCB, 2004), thus the older participants might have been in contact with people from India more than the younger participants, and vice versa. Finally, regarding the differences in attitudes based on educational differences, participants with a high school- or university diploma tend to think that English proficiency is a necessary tool for success while those currently in university believe it depends on the field within one seeks success.

In conclusion, the general attitudes displayed through the results of this study show that the participants are mostly familiar with BrE and AmE, and also tend to rank them as 1’s or 2’s. There were no major differences in the attitudes determined by the different social factors (gender, age and educational level). Altogether, the attitudes towards IndE and NigE were not very positive, which proves that the change of syllabus in the Swedish school system has not

yet made an impact on the Swedish people. Since the changes were made just a few years ago, hopefully the younger students will benefit from the updated syllabus. By this point, we can move to the conclusions.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the attitudes of Swedish people towards four varieties of the English language: Indian English, American English, Nigerian English and British English. The study was conducted using a written questionnaire which was spread through the social media channel Facebook. In this way the participants could also spread the questionnaire to others which was a good way to collect data from many different types of people in Sweden. A total of 157 participants answered the questionnaire during the twelve days it was available. The findings of the study displayed some differences between the different genders, ages and the educational level of the participants. The gender differences were that men tend to be more familiar with NigE than women, and that women are more inclined to see BrE and AmE as distinct languages. The age differences displayed that older participants more frequently answered that English is a necessary tool for success, while the younger generation think it depends on the definition of success, or in which field one wants to become successful. Younger participants also tend to have been more exposed to NigE, while the older participants are more familiar with IndE. The differences in the educational levels were that those with a high school- or university diploma tend to think more frequently that English is a necessary tool for success, while current university student believe it depends on the definition of success or in which field one wants to become successful.

More in general, English is a central and important language worldwide, as it serves as a tool for communication in many different ways, in various domains, and to many different people. It is hard to say whether English belongs to one country or another, since it has gained such international significance. On the one hand many nations, cultures, and individuals depend on English, and on the other hand the growth and development of English depends on those who use it. The power of a global language like English is that it unites the world and its inhabitants by making it easier for us to connect with one another and break linguistic barriers. Work opportunities, education, research, traveling, music, TV-shows, movies and other aspects of globalization have become available for many by the spread of the language. Since the English language has played such an important role in the process of colonization, it has also become a sensitive topic in several ways. Various countries such as India and Nigeria have developed new varieties of the English language, and thus added weight to the concept

of World Englishes.

As displayed by the findings of this study, the knowledge of the scientifically more accurate way of addressing English – *Englishes* – has not been promoted enough in Sweden, as we see that many participants were not familiar with the Englishes outside the Inner Circle. The following topics were not covered by this study, thus left for future research: It would be interesting to do a similar study exclusively on English teachers in Sweden, to see if the changes in the syllabus have widened the topics within the education. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see if people with different linguistic backgrounds display different attitudes. We leave further research for the future, however.

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Appendix 1 – General results

Q1 – “Choose your gender” TABLE 1

Female	Men	Other
115 (73.2%)	41 (26.1%)	1 (0.6%)

Q2 – “How old are you?” TABLE 2

16-30 years	31-62 years
120 (76.43%)	37 (23.57%)

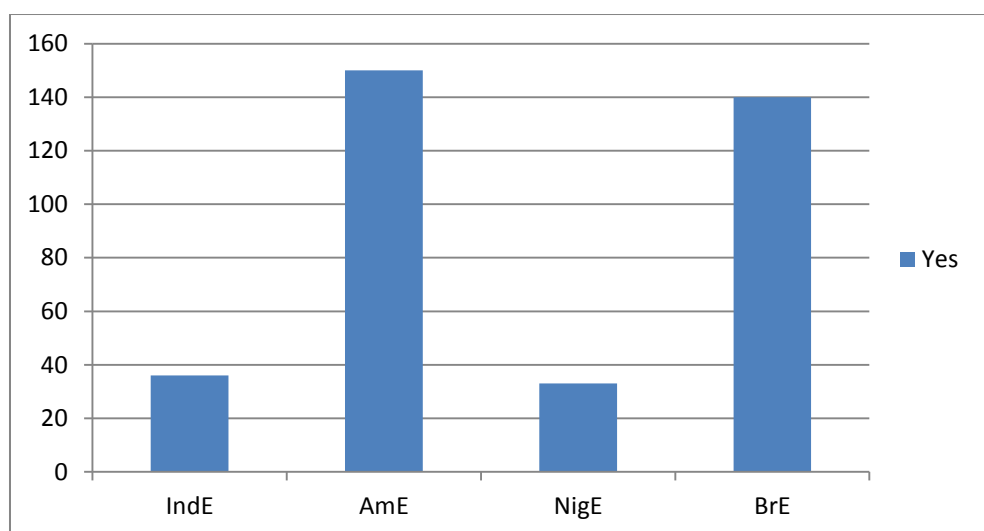
Q8 – “What is your level of education?” TABLE 3

Currently in Univeristy	University Diploma	High school Diploma	Other
18 (11.46%)	86 (54.78%)	49 (31.21%)	4 (2.55%)

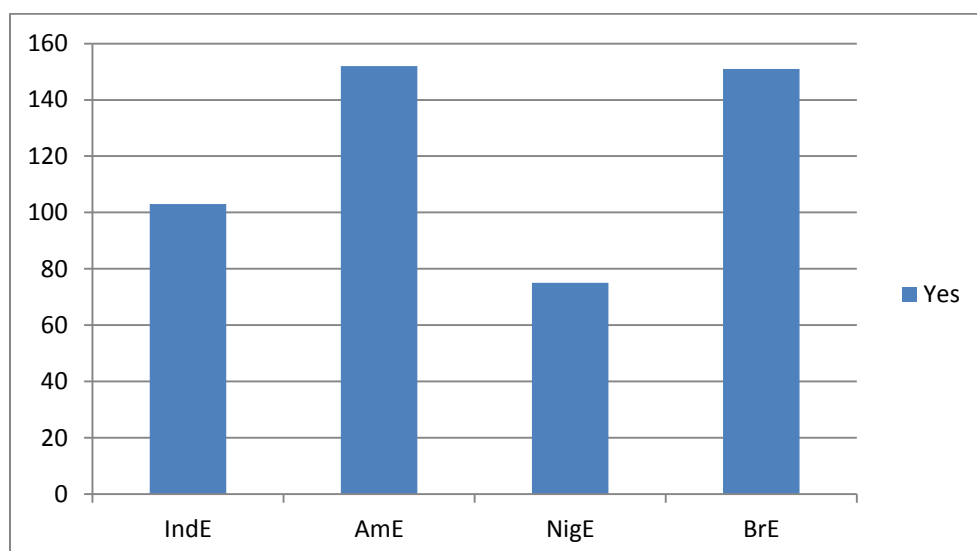
Q13 – “Do you think that people need to learn English if they want to become successful?” TABLE 4

Yes	No	No, but it is a good tool	Depends on what success means or within which field one wants to become successful	Other
104 (66.24%)	18 (11.46%)	11 (7.01%)	23 (14.65%)	1 (0.64%)

Q14 – “Choose the varieties of English that you are familiar with” FIGURE 1



Q15 – “Choose the varieties of English that you have used, or heard somebody else use” FIGURE 2



Q16 – “Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most ‘pleasant’ or ‘understandable’ English” Ranked from top to bottom TABLE 5

AmE (71.97%)
BrE (63.06%)
IndE (50.96%)
NigE (63.06%)

Q17 – “Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most appropriate for public speakers or people in media” Ranked from top to bottom TABLE 6

AmE (56.69%)
BrE (48.41%)
IndE (51.59%)
NigE (40.76%)

Q18 – “Which English would you recommend to somebody who wants to learn English?” Ranked from top to bottom TABLE 7

AmE (53.5%)
BrE (49.68%)
IndE (52.87%)
NigE (40.76%)

Q19 – “In your opinion, is Indian English a dialect or a distinct language?” TABLE 8

Dialect	133 (84.71%)
Language	19 (12.2%)
Other	5 (3.18%)

Q20 – “In your opinion, is American English a dialect or a distinct language?” TABLE 9

Dialect	91 (57.86%)
Language	62 (39.49%)
Other	4 (2.55%)

Q21 – “In your opinion, is Nigerian English a dialect or a distinct language?” TABLE 10

Dialect	99 (63.06%)
Language	40 (25.48%)
Other	8 (5.1%)

Q22 – “In your opinion, is British English a dialect or a distinct language?” TABLE 11

Dialect	73 (46.5%)
Language	83 (52.87%)
Other	1 (0.64%)

Appendix 2 – Social factor-specific results

Q16 – “Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most ‘pleasant’ or ‘understandable’ English” Ranked from top to bottom

Women	Men
AmE (71.3%)	AmE (75.61%)
BrE (61.74%)	BrE (68.29%)
IndE (50.43%)	IndE (53.66%)
NigE (37.39%)	NigE (36.59%)

TABLE 1 GENDER

16-30	31-62
AmE (73.33%)	AmE (67.57%)
BrE (64.17%)	BrE (59.46%)
IndE (44.17%)	IndE (72.97%)
NigE (38.33%)	NigE (62.16%)

TABLE 2 AGE

Currently in University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
AmE (72.22%)	AmE (72.09%)	AmE (71.43%)
BrE (66.67%)	BrE (63.95%)	BrE (61.22%)
IndE (44.44%)	IndE (51.16%)	IndE (53.06%)
NigE (38.89%)	NigE (40.7%)	NigE (34.69%)

**TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Q17 – “Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most appropriate for public speakers or people in media” Ranked from top to bottom

Women	Men
AmE (56.52%)	AmE (58.54%)
BrE (51.3%)	BrE (51.22%)
IndE (51.3%)	IndE (53.66%)
NigE (43.48%)	NigE (39.02%)

TABLE 4 GENDER

16-30	31-62
AmE (60%)	BrE (62.16%)
BrE (50.83%)	AmE (51.35%)
IndE (42.5%)	IndE (81.08%)
NigE (34.17%)	NigE (67.57%)

TABLE 5 AGE

Currently in University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
BrE (61.11%)	AmE (53.49%)	AmE (65.31%)
AmE (55.56%)	BrE (52.33%)	BrE (51.02%)
IndE (50%)	IndE (54.65%)	IndE (46.94%)
NigE (38.89%)	NigE (45.35%)	NigE (36.73%)

**TABLE 6
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Q18 – “Which English would you recommend to somebody who wants to learn English?” Ranked from top to bottom

Women	Men
AmE (55.65%)	BrE (51.22%)
BrE (49.57%)	AmE (48.78%)
IndE (49.57%)	IndE (60.98%)
NigE (37.39%)	NigE (48.78%)

TABLE 7 GENDER

16-30	31-62
AmE (57.5%)	BrE (62.16%)
BrE (52.5%)	AmE (54.05%)
IndE (46.67%)	IndE (70.27%)
NigE (33.33%)	NigE (62.16%)

TABLE 8 AGE

Currently in University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
BrE (61.11%)	AmE (58.14%)	AmE (53.06%)
AmE (55.56%)	BrE (50%)	BrE (51.02%)
IndE (55.56%)	IndE (53.49%)	IndE (46.94%)
NigE (38.89%)	NigE (45.35%)	NigE (30.61%)

**TABLE 9
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Q19 – “In your opinion, is Indian English a dialect or a distinct language?”

	Women	Men
Dialect	95 (82.61%)	37 (90.24%)
Language	16 (13.91%)	3 (7.32%)
Other	4 (3.48%)	1 (2.44%)

TABLE 10 GENDER

	16-30	31-62
Dialect	101 (84.17%)	32 (86.49%)
Language	15 (12.5%)	4 (10.81%)
Other	4 (3.33%)	1 (2.7%)

TABLE 11 AGE

	Currently at University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
Dialect	15 (83.33%)	74 (86.05%)	41 (83.67%)
Language	2 (11.11%)	10 (11.63%)	6 (12.24%)
Other	1 (5.56%)	2 (2.32%)	2 (4.08%)

TABLE 12 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Q20 – “In your opinion, is American English a dialect or a distinct language?”

	Women	Men
Dialect	62 (53.91%)	28 (68.29%)
Language	50 (43.48%)	12 (29.27%)
Other	3 (2.61%)	1 (2.44%)

TABLE 13 GENDER

	16-30	31-62
Dialect	73 (60.83%)	18 (48.65%)
Language	43 (35.83%)	19 (51.35%)
Other	4 (3.33%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 14 AGE

	Currently at University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
Dialect	13 (72.22%)	52 (60.47%)	23 (46.94%)
Language	5 (27.78%)	32 (37.21%)	24 (48.98%)
Other	0 (0%)	2 (2.32%)	2 (4.08%)

**TABLE 15
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Q21 – “In your opinion, is Nigerian English a dialect or a distinct language?”

	Women	Men
Dialect	72 (62.61%)	27 (65.85%)
Language	31 (26.96%)	9 (21.95%)
Other	12 (10.43%)	5 (12.2%)

TABLE 16 GENDER

	16-30	31-62
Dialect	73 (60.83%)	26 (70.27%)
Language	34 (28.33%)	6 (16.22%)
Other	13 (10.83%)	5 (13.51%)

TABLE 17 AGE

	Currently at University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
Dialect	10 (55.56%)	55 (63.95%)	31 (63.95%)
Language	5 (27.78%)	20 (23.26%)	14 (28.57%)
Other	3 (16.67%)	11 (12.8%)	4 (6.12%)

**TABLE 18
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Q22 – “In your opinion, is British English a dialect or a distinct language?”

	Women	Men
Dialect	45 (39.13%)	27 (65.85%)
Language	69 (60%)	14 (34.15%)
Other	1 (0.87%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 19 GENDER

	16-30	31-62
Dialect	60 (60%)	13 (35.14%)
Language	59 (49.17%)	24 (64.86%)
Other	1 (0.83%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 20 AGE

	Currently at University	University Diploma	High school Diploma
Dialect	10 (55.56%)	35 (40.7%)	26 (53.06%)
Language	8 (44.44%)	50 (58.14%)	23 (46.94%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

**TABLE 21
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Appendix 3 – The Written Questionnaire

English Survey

In the questionnaire you will be asked about your thoughts of the English language. The answers will be used for a small research project about English in Sweden. You are anonymous and your answers can not be linked to you personally. Therefore I ask you to please fill in the questionnaire as truthfully as possible.

The questionnaire will start by asking about your background, such as your gender, age and birthplace. Then you will be asked about your opinion regarding four varieties of English. The questionnaire consists of 22 questions and should take 6-7 minutes of your time. Click on “begin” to proceed.

If you are interested in reading the outcome of this study, please send an e-mail to gusarmasa@student.gu.se and I will e-mail you when the project is finished.

Q1 – Choose your gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

Q2 – How old are you?

Q3 – Where was your mother born? (Country)

Q4 - Where was your father born? (Country)

Q5 - Where were you born? (Country)

Q6 – Where were you raised? (One or more countries)

Q7 – Where do you live now and for how long have you lived there? (Country/Period)

Q8 – What is your level of education? (For example Elementary School, High School, University)

Q9 – What is your current occupation?

Q10 – What languages do you know?

Q11 – Where/How did you learn English? (For example in school, from TV)

Q12 – How do you normally come in contact with English? (For example at school/work, on TV/radio, on the internet)

Q13 – Do you think that people need to learn English if they want to become successful?

Q14 – Choose the varieties of English that you are familiar with.

- ☐ Indian English
- ☐ American English
- ☐ Nigerian English
- ☐ British English

Q15 – Choose the varieties of English that you have used, or heard somebody else use.

- ☐ Indian English
- ☐ American English
- ☐ Nigerian English
- ☐ British English

Q16 – Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most ‘pleasant’ or ‘understandable’ English. 1 comes first, 2 comes second, and so on. If you are not familiar with one or more of the options, write “I am not familiar with this” in the box.

- ___ Indian English
- ___ American English
- ___ Nigerian English
- ___ British English

Q17 - Rank the different Englishes based on what you believe is the most appropriate for public speakers or people in media (TV/Radio/Newspapers). 1 comes first, 2 comes second, and so on. If you are not familiar with one or more of the options, write “I am not familiar with this” in the box.

- ___ Indian English
- ___ American English
- ___ Nigerian English
- ___ British English

Q18 – Which English would you recommend to somebody who wants to learn English?

1 comes first, 2 comes second, and so on. If you are not familiar with one or more of the options, write “I am not familiar with this” in the box.

- ___ Indian English
- ___ American English
- ___ Nigerian English
- ___ British English

Q19 – In your opinion, is Indian English a dialect or a distinct language?

- ☐ A dialect
- ☐ A distinct language
- ☐ Other _____

Q20 - In your opinion, is American English a dialect or a distinct language?

- ☐ A dialect
- ☐ A distinct language
- ☐ Other _____

Q21 - In your opinion, is Nigerian English a dialect or a distinct language?

- ☐ A dialect
- ☐ A distinct language
- ☐ Other _____

Q22 - In your opinion, is British English a dialect or a distinct language?

- ☐ A dialect
- ☐ A distinct language
- ☐ Other _____

Thank you for participating!